

# Citizen Journalism Guidelines

ON ELECTORAL REPORTING IN ZIMBABWE



ims

INTERNATIONAL  
MEDIA SUPPORT

March 2018

Published in Denmark by IMS in March 2018

International Media Support (IMS) is a non-profit organisation that works to support local media in countries affected by armed conflict, human insecurity and political transition. Across four continents IMS helps to strengthen professional journalism and ensure that media can operate in challenging circumstances



**Mediasupport.org**



**Facebook.com/InternationalMediaSupport**



**Twitter.com/forfreedia**

Authors and Editors

Dr. Admire Mare, Henrik Keith, Simbiso Marimbe & Rashweat Mukundu

Cover Photo: A citizen journalist covering the voting process at a by-election in rural Gutu, Zimbabwe



Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1:</b> Introduction and Background	<b>3</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2:</b> What is Citizen Journalism?	<b>4</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3:</b> Citizen Journalism in Practice	<b>21</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4:</b> Ethics	<b>35</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5:</b> Special Concerns	<b>38</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6:</b> Moderation of Social Media Groups	<b>44</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7:</b> Safety Concerns	<b>49</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>53</b>

## PREFACE

The International Media Support (IMS) commissioned the development of this guide to support the training of citizen journalists on covering electoral matters in Zimbabwe.

IMS and the Media Alliance of Zimbabwe (MAZ) are implementing the programme, “Support to Media on Governance and Electoral Matters in Zimbabwe” between October 2017 and March 2019 with support from the European Union (EU) and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The program aims at enhancing the capacities of media [broadly defined] to report on electoral cycle and governance matters in a more articulate, comprehensive and inclusive manner; as well as to increase citizen access to media and information platforms throughout the electoral cycle and after.

This is premised on the realization that citizen journalists’ use of alternative media platforms plays an important role in providing information to citizens located in marginalised communities with limited access to mainstream media throughout the electoral cycle. People living in rural and peri-urban communities, particularly women and youths in these areas are likely to benefit more from the work of citizen journalists that facilitate citizen information sharing and debates on alternative media platforms within those communities.

The purpose of this manual is to familiarise citizen journalists with the core issues of election reporting including ethics, safety and security, fake news, hate speech and the broader issues around the electoral system in Zimbabwe. It also focuses on gender and the media, photography, live-streaming and mobile reporting.

The manual will offer useful tips to citizen journalists on how to write an election story for diverse platforms that include SMS, social media, radio, newspapers, newsletters, among others, capturing the essence of a story, facts, and voices and transmit that information on these platforms. It also focuses on how to gather, share, upload, live-stream various pieces of information ranging from text, audio, videos and photos. This guide will also be handy for citizen journalists interested in live-streaming and mobile reporting in the African context.

## CHAPTER 1: Introduction and Background

The advent of new media technologies and adoption of 3G and 4G technologies in Zimbabwe has seen a gradual growth of citizen journalism and online based civic activism. A100 percent mobile and 50% internet penetration has also allowed marginalised communities to become part of the digital public sphere.

These developments have been accompanied by the mushrooming of media start-up companies and unprecedented circulation of user generated content. The internet has made significant contributions as a new source of information and a forum for civic engagement. With the information/internet age along came Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter, and government censorship has been severely undermined. Online communities have mushroomed with millions of photos and videos being shared daily inside and outside of Zimbabwe. The decentralised nature of the internet has allowed more information to be imparted to citizens and less gatekeeping.

Thus, citizens saw an opportunity to become gatekeepers and watchdogs, constantly monitoring corporate and political power online, placing them under scrutiny and surveillance.

In line with the above this manual has been produced to support Zimbabwe's Citizen Journalists and media advocates in reporting on and moderating public debates and dialogues on elections in Zimbabwe. This within a context where Zimbabwe's political and media landscape remains untransformed despite the military-induced transition in November 2017 which was accompanied by the resignation of Robert Mugabe and the elevation of Emmerson Mnangagwa to the position of President.

This manual will aid media advocates in capacitating a variety of organised Citizen Journalists in urban and rural areas.

The manual seeks to capacitate and motivate Citizen Journalists noting that citizens generally lack adequate information that enables them to participate in governance processes that affect their lives resulting in a passive citizenry.

This manual also recognises that repressive media laws such as the Access to Information Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, Public Order and Security Act (POSA), Official Secrets Act (OSA), Interception of Communication Act and others continue to exist and discussions are provided on how Citizen Journalists can manoeuvre this legal minefield. This manual also notes that despite the licensing of commercial radio stations, Zimbabwe's media is dominated by the state owned media and private radio stations that are tied directly either through ownership or political connections to the ruling elite.

## Why a Citizen Journalism Manual

- As Zimbabwe prepares for the elections, this manual is intended for capacity building trainings of Citizen Journalists working with media advocacy groups.
- This manual will enable Citizen Journalists to reference issues of interests in their day to day media work, especially on the specific issues of electoral conduct in Zimbabwe.
- Using this manual, Citizen Journalists will be able to share skills with others based on issues discussed in this manual.

## CHAPTER 2: What is Citizen Journalism?

Like all other terms, citizen journalism has been defined differently by a number of scholars. However, despite their differences, they concur that citizen journalism is made of the following essential qualities:

- The gathering and reporting of news by people who are not trained as professional journalists<sup>1</sup>;

<sup>1</sup> Hermans, L., Vergeer, M. and D'Haenens, L. 2009.

- The act in which a citizen, or group of citizens play an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information with the intention of providing independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that is required for democracy and development<sup>2</sup>;
- It is an alternative and activist form of news gathering and reporting that functions outside mainstream media institutions, often as a response to shortcomings in the professional journalistic field, which uses similar journalistic practices but is driven by different objectives and ideals and relies on alternative sources of legitimacy than traditional or mainstream journalism<sup>3</sup>.
- It is when the people formerly known as the audience employ the press tools they have in their possession to inform one another. Citizen journalists are 'the people formerly known as the audience'<sup>4</sup>, are those who were on the receiving end of a media system that ran one way, in a broadcasting pattern, with high entry fees and a few firms competing to speak very loudly while the rest of the population listened in isolation from one another - and who today are not in a situation like that at all.

It is clear from the above that citizen journalism is about the mobilization of ordinary (i.e. untrained) citizens in order for them to play an active role in their community and the media they are consuming.

In Zimbabwe there is also a growing use of offline citizen information platforms that include newsletters.

A key idea behind citizen journalism is that people without professional journalism training can use the tools of modern technology and the global distribution of the internet to create, augment or fact-check media on their own or in collaboration with others.

<sup>2</sup> Bowman, S. and Willis, C.2003.

<sup>3</sup> Lievrouw, L.A. 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Rosen, J. 2008.

## Types of Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism can take many forms. These include:

1. Institutionalised (semi-independent) and non-institutionalised (fully independent). Institutional citizen journalism, on the other hand, refers to that type of citizen journalism which has a form of organizational structure or constraining ability, complete with external constraints, however minimal.
2. Non-institutional forms of citizen journalism are extra-institutional, placing the individual at the core of the practice. This appears to be the notion of citizen journalism that readily lends itself to different forms of social networking, where private citizens use a combination of platforms to generate content and disseminate it as widely as possible. Non-institutional citizen journalism revolves around the individual.
3. Semi Independent Citizen Journalism: It involves citizens contributing, in one form or another, to existing professional news sites. For example: Readers are posting their comments alongside stories written by professional reporters, essentially a 21st-century version of the **letter to the editor**. A growing number of media organizations in Zimbabwe allow readers to post comments. In an effort to prevent obscene or objectionable messages, some news websites (like the Herald, Daily News and NewsDay) require that readers register in order to post.
4. Independent Citizen Journalism: It involves citizen journalists working in ways that are fully independent of traditional, professional news outlets. These can be blogs in which individuals can report on events in their communities or offer commentary on the issues of the day.

Examples include: Websites like the Zimbabwe Sentinel [www.zimsentinel.com](http://www.zimsentinel.com), Magamba Network <http://motorepublik.co> and **Open Parly ZW (@OpenParlyZw)** are run by a group of people that report on news events in the local community.



# Differentiating Citizen Journalism from Professional Journalism

CITIZEN JOURNALISM	PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Does not operate on the basis of a formal newsroom structure. They practice journalism from anywhere possible and convenient</li><li>• Speed is of essence - breaking news</li><li>• Use of amateur multimedia devices &amp; basic editing</li><li>• Information often unverified</li><li>• No obligation of accountability</li><li>• Use of pseudonym accounts</li><li>• Ethical practices are in some cases not adhered to</li><li>• No regulation, filtering, gatekeeping</li><li>• Citizen journalists do not necessarily get paid for their work</li><li>• Close to sources and everyday events and communities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Operates in a formalised editorial structure</li><li>• Speed is curtailed by verification process</li><li>• Use of professional devices &amp; thorough editing</li><li>• Steps taken to verify information</li><li>• Accountability is a core value</li><li>• Ethics are standard</li><li>• Regulation bodies exist and there is gate-keeping</li><li>• Professional journalists are employed and are paid for practicing journalism</li></ul>

## Similarities between Citizen Journalism and Professional Journalism

While there are marked differences between citizen journalism and professional journalism as presented above, the two types of journalism also share some similarities as presented below:

### 1. Driving or motivating forces

Both citizen journalism and professional journalism have telling the truth, spreading information and upholding the truth as their driving forces.

### 2. Common values

Citizen journalism and professional journalism must operate on the basis of long-accepted values of good journalism that promote journalistic integrity. The foremost of these values are objectivity, truthfulness and fairness.

### 3. Common mission

The common mission of both citizen journalists and professional journalists is to promote transparency and accountability by finding the story and informing the public in a truthful manner.

### 4. What is at stake?

Citizen journalism and professional journalism also share a similarity in terms of what is at stake. What is at stake in the practice of both citizen journalism and professional journalism is the free flow of information, which must not be hindered by laws, socio-economic conditions, changing technologies or failing systems.<sup>5</sup>

## Characteristics of Citizen Journalism<sup>6</sup>

Upon discussing and learning about what citizen journalism is and what sets it apart from professional journalism, it is important to single out the individual

<sup>5</sup> Rosen, J. 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Characteristics of Citizen Journalism presented under section 1.6 were adapted from a variety from sources that include Ross and Comier, 2010; Glaser 2006; Outing, 2006, Rosen; 2004 and Wendland, 2003

characteristics of this form of journalism. The main characteristics of citizen journalism include the following:

### **Citizen Journalism is participatory**

Citizen journalism is an interactive form of journalism that allows average citizens to be active participants in the creation and spreading of news and information.

### **Citizen Journalism operates on the basis of a decentralized, bottom-up structure and process**

The structure and workflow of citizen journalism is decentralized and typically occurs outside and independent of the traditional newsroom. Like the Internet itself, citizen journalism is self-organizing and structured from the bottom to the top. The means of creating and disseminating news and information is distributed across, geography, technologies and the knowledge of many individuals. Instead of being based on media organizations, information that circulates through citizen journalism is from the community, by the community and for the community.

### **Citizen Journalism is not profit driven**

Unlike in mainstream journalism that is largely driven by the objective of generating profit, the majority of citizen journalism activities are not conducted for profit.

### **Diversity of viewpoints**

Citizen journalism tends to produce a greater diversity of perspectives and expertise than MSM and gives readers access to more viewpoints and information to draw their own conclusions.

### **Emphasis on publishing as opposed to gatekeeping**

Citizen journalism makes publishing news and information a priority rather than controlling content through the editorial process. In practice however, most forms of citizen journalism entail degrees of editorial control.

### **Citizen Journalism is journalism in form of a conversation**

Citizen journalism is characterized by a two-way conversation that occurs between citizen journalists, between citizen journalists and other members of the community and/or between citizen and professional journalists. The conversational nature of

citizen journalism reveals a more accurate account of how news and information is actually created.

### **Immediacy**

Citizen journalists can be more mobile and responsive to breaking news than traditional journalists. Unhampered by traditional structures or editing processes, citizen journalists can report on issues as they occur.

### **Citizen Journalism places emphasis on details**

Unlike conventionally trained journalists, citizen journalists frequently present news and public issues with an articulated point of view. They strive for fairness by fully explaining their point of view and offering diverse views, ideas, and perspectives. It requires readers to develop their own criteria for judging authority and accuracy.

## **Why Media and Citizen Journalism Matter in Electoral Processes?**

- The media are essential for the conduct of free and fair elections as they share election stories and high light issues of concern by voters and political parties.
- A free and fair election is not only about the freedom to vote and the knowledge of how to cast a vote, but also about a participatory process where voters engage in public debate and have adequate information about parties, policies, candidates and the election process itself in order to make informed choices.
- Furthermore, media acts as a crucial watchdog to democratic elections, safeguarding the transparency of the elections.
- A prime concern of citizen journalism's coverage of elections is the right of voters to full and accurate information, and their rights to participate in debates and dialogue on policy matters and with politicians.



Citizens undergo Biometric Voter Registration process in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe

Photo: ZESN

## Roles Citizen Journalism Plays in Elections

Citizen journalism plays a “watchdog” role: by unfettered scrutiny and discussion of the successes and failures of candidates, governments, and electoral management bodies. Yet citizen journalists also have other roles in enabling full public participation in elections by:

- Educating voters on how to exercise their democratic rights;
- Reporting on the development of an election campaign;
- Providing a platform for the political parties and candidates to communicate their message to the electorate;
- Providing a platform for the public to communicate their concerns, opinions, and needs, to the parties/candidates, the Electoral Management Bodies, the government, and to other voters, and to interact on these issues;

- Allowing the parties and candidates to debate with each other;
- Reporting results and monitoring vote counting;
- Scrutinizing the electoral process, itself, including electoral management, in order to evaluate the fairness of the process, its efficiency, and its probity;
- Providing information that does not use inflammatory language and is helping to prevent election-related violence.
- Providing context and clarity to relevant events and developments that take place in the community.<sup>7</sup> The need to inform the public may also be in relation to raising awareness on human rights and any other issues that are in public interest. Provide the public and policy makers with information for example, information that exposes electoral malpractices and vote rigging may prompt observers and international community not to recognize fraudulent polls.
- Exposing corrupt activities of electoral management bodies, traditional leaders, police and observers may exert pressure on powers that be to bring such people to account for their actions.

## What Citizen Journalists can do During the Electoral Cycle?

Electoral processes constitute a rich subject for citizen journalists as they relate to procedures, laws, representation of policy issues, and they require fairness and integrity. In this regard, citizen journalism appears as a useful mechanism to cover elections as well as to hold accountability:

- Citizen journalists provide on the spot information on polling stations during the elections

<sup>7</sup> Ross and Comier, 2010

- Citizen journalists monitor election proceedings by taking pictures, photos and other activities on election ground.
- Citizen journalists investigate and unearth electoral fraud and report to the general public.
- Citizen journalists update electorates with vital information regarding the conduct of election proceedings
- Citizen journalism enables members of the public to participate fully in the election by monitoring trends before, during and after the election.
- Citizen journalism can focus on the profiles of the candidates, their programs and their integrity in order to help the electorate make an informed choice.

## **These electoral issues could be crucial to cover for citizen reporters:**

- Monitor election proceedings by taking pictures, photos and other activities on election ground.
- Provide on the spot information on polling stations during the elections
- Investigate and unearth electoral fraud and report to the general public.
- Update the electorate with vital information regarding the conduct of election proceedings
- Interview election agents, observer missions and electoral management authorities on the actual conduct of the election processes.

## What Citizen Journalists Need to Know about the Zimbabwean Electoral System

One of the main issues that [citizen] journalists covering elections normally face is low awareness about the electoral law.

This section looks at the basics of the Zimbabwe electoral laws and processes. It also defines key terms used in electoral processes as well as spelling out the voting systems used in the country. It looks at the electoral management systems as well as voting registration processes like BVR which are important. It discusses briefly the voting systems and tallying of results, observation of elections and the role of citizen monitors in that process. It also highlights the dos and don'ts, who does what and why during elections.

Some of the key issues citizen journalists must be familiar with include the following: electoral system; legal framework; electoral commission; voter registration process; electoral preparations; voter information and education; out-of-country registration and postal ballots; pre-polling environment and complaints; code of conduct for parties; primaries and nomination of candidates; polling day and voting procedures; vote counting and compilation of results; and post-election events and complaints.

### Electoral systems

There are many electoral systems around the world, but they mainly fall under three categories:

*Plurality:* A candidate who obtains more votes than any other is elected even if that candidate wins only a minority of votes cast. The most common form of this is the “first-past-the-post” system, sometimes known as “winner takes all”, used in countries such as Britain, the United States, India and Zimbabwe (until the new constitution came in recently although the country has used party lists before), among others.

*Majority:* The successful candidate must win more votes than those of all the others combined. This is normally achieved by holding a two-round contest in which the early loser is eliminated after the first.



*Proportional Representation (PR)*: The most common version of this is when voters choose from party lists and seats are allocated according to the votes going to each party. This is used in most European countries, South Africa and Israel. Zimbabwe has partly adopted this and thus it now has a mixture of plurality and PR.

## **Free and fair elections**

What are free and fair elections? Some are now using the phrase “peaceful and credible elections” instead of free and fair. But what are free and fair elections? “An election is ‘free’ when it reflects the full expression of the political will of the people concerned. Freedom in this sense involves the ability to participate in the political process without intimidation, coercion, discrimination, or the abridgment of the rights to associate with others, to assemble and to receive or impart information. “The ‘fairness’ of an election refers to the right to vote on the basis of equality, non-discrimination, and universality. No portion of the electorate should be arbitrarily disqualified, or have their votes given extra weight.”

## **The basics**

As soon as an election date is announced and campaigning begins, the citizen journalists should write stories about how many parties are involved, how many candidates, the number of constituencies and eligible voters, among other things.

## **Campaign funding**

Citizen journalists must be interested in how parties are funded and how they finance their campaigns. Is there a system of state financing for political parties, as exists in other countries? Is there a limit to business/private donations to party campaigns? And is there an obligation for parties to declare them?

## **Campaigning**

Election campaigns are challenging and exhausting for journalists covering them. Senate, sitting separately and voting in favour of dissolution. The President can also dissolve Parliament on his own initiative if it unreasonably refuses to pass a Bill on the appropriation of revenue for approved government expenditure.

## **The proclamation of the election date**

The President proclaims a date for the holding of elections whenever they fall due after consultation with the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC). The proclamation

issued by the President fixes the place(s), day(s) and time(s) for the sitting of the nomination court and the actual date for the elections. The proclamation also makes provision for the conduct of a presidential run-off election should one become necessary. This proclamation officially marks the start of the election period which runs from the date of the proclamation to the date of announcement of the results.

### **Closing the voters' (electoral) roll**

Voter registration and inspection of the voters' roll is done on a continuous basis. While the voters' roll remains open for new registrations on a continuous basis, only those voters who are registered and whose names appear on the voters' roll twelve (12) days after nomination court will be entitled to cast their votes in this election. This means while the voters' roll remains open for registration, the "electoral roll" (i.e. the voters' roll that will be used during the elections) will be closed with effect from the twelfth day after the sitting of the nomination court.

### **Voter education**

While civic education can be done at any time in the electoral cycle, there is always a heightened voter education drive during the period of the mobile voter registration exercise. The primary duty to provide voter education lies with ZEC and it may authorise any other person or organisation to conduct voter education on its behalf. Political parties may engage in voter education at will without ZEC's approval.

### **Nomination court and challenges**

The nomination of candidates for the elections takes place at least fourteen (14) days after the issuance of the proclamation calling for elections. Political parties can furnish ZEC with nomination papers for its representatives intending to contest in all the elections, countersigned by designated office bearers of the political parties concerned in advance<sup>11</sup>. ZEC will scrutinise these and request the political parties to attend to any queries which may arise from the nomination papers and re-submit them after rectifying the identified queries.

### **Printing and publication of ballot papers**

ZEC is responsible for designing, printing and distributing ballot papers. It must also disclose information relating to the provision of ballot papers. In particular, the Commission must, without delay, inform all political parties and candidates contesting

an election, and all observers, of the place where and by whom the ballot papers for the election have been or are being printed; the total number of ballot papers that have been printed for the election; and the number of ballot papers that have been distributed to each polling station and special polling station.

### **Early voting (postal and special voting)**

Postal Voting is only available to individuals who will be outside Zimbabwe on polling day on government business, and their spouses. Postal Voting is only open to such persons who apply to do so within fourteen (14) days after the sitting of the nomination court. The successful applicants will be furnished with the voting material in advance and they will be required to cast their votes and return them in sealed packets which must be received by the Chief Elections Officer at ZEC at least fourteen (14) days before the actual date of the poll.

Special Voting is only open to persons who will be electoral officers in the election concerned and members of the disciplined forces who will be performing security duties on polling day outside the wards in which they are registered voters. Special voting is done in two days.

### **Accreditation of observers**

The accreditation of observers is done by an Observers' Accreditation Committee. Individuals and organisations who wish to observe any election are entitled to apply for accreditation, but this must be done at least four (4) days before the date of the general poll. Applications for accreditation are considered forthwith upon receipt. Accredited observers are entitled to observe the whole electoral process in the election period in respect of which they have been accredited up to the announcement of final results.

### **Polling day**

In the past, although there is no law to that effect, the polling dates have almost always been set on Saturdays to ensure greater convenience to the voters.

### **Aliens**

This refers to people who are born outside or inside Zimbabwe and neither of their parents or grandparents are Zimbabweans by birth or descent. On their national IDs,

there is letter “A” symbolising aliens and not “C” which stands for citizens. The Supreme Court ruled in 2017 that aliens with either of their parents born in any Southern African country are eligible to register to vote in 2018.

### **Where to vote on polling day and documents required**

Except for postal and special voters, a person intending to vote is only entitled to do so at a particular polling station located within the ward in which he/she is registered as a voter.

A voter must take with him/her their valid national identity document. If the voter is in possession of a voter registration certificate, this should also be carried (particularly for newly-registered and first-time voters) in case their name does not appear on the voters’ roll for some reason.

Married women who have not changed their surname to that of their husbands should carry with them, in addition to their national identity document, their marriage certificate in case their surname has been changed on the voters’ roll without their knowledge or approval.

### **Manner of voting and assisted voters**

Voting is done in secret. Persons who are illiterate and/or living with disability may, upon request, be assisted to vote by a person of their own choice. For visually impaired voters, the presiding officer is entitled to observe the casting of the ballot for that particular voter.

### **Persons entitled to be in a polling station**

The following persons are allowed inside a polling station and are allowed to be present during the counting of votes and opening of postal and special ballot boxes:-

- (a) Members of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission; and
- (b) Electoral officers present for the performance of their duties; and
- (c) An election agent of each candidate in the election concerned; and
- (d) The chief election agents of each candidate in the case of an election to the office of President; and
- (e) Accredited observers.

## **Presence of police officers inside polling stations**

Police officers are generally required to be within the vicinity of a polling station to perform any duty that they may be requested to perform at the polling station and the area surrounding it by the presiding officer.

## **Conduct of personnel in and around polling stations**

All individuals who are inside a polling station must refrain from using their mobile telephones and from taking photographs and video footage of the polling station, the materials, the personnel and voters in the booth or casting their votes. Observers are permitted to take notes of what they observe during the process.

## **Counting of votes and announcement of results**

The total unmarked ballot papers and serial numbers of ballot books received at each polling station are counted and recorded before the polling station opens on Election Day. This must be done in the presence of the persons who are entitled to be in a polling station, including political party election agents and accredited observers. The announcement of the presidential election result is done by the Chairperson of ZEC or, in her absence, the Deputy Chairperson, or another ZEC Commissioner. No other person can declare a presidential candidate duly elected.

## **Recounting of votes**

Votes can be recounted at the request of any political party or candidate who contested in the election. A written application for the recount must be made to ZEC giving reasonable grounds to justify the recount. ZEC may also, on its own, order a recount of votes in any polling station where it considers on reasonable grounds that there might have been a miscount.

## **Challenges to election results**

Depending on the type of the election, disputes about the outcome of the election are determined by either the Constitutional Court or the Electoral Court.

## **Biometric voter registration**

The national election body, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) rolled out the Biometric voter registration (BVR) in March 2017. It captures voters' unique biometric features, specifically fingerprints and facial imaging which are recorded in a database.

## **Polling-station vs ward based polling procedure**

Polling station-based voting is provided for by Section 22A of the amended Electoral Act. Previous elections in Zimbabwe have used ward-based voting, resulting in long queues as one could vote at any polling station in their ward. Polling station-based procedure is preferred because it eliminates the possibility of multiple voting and it provides one with an opportunity to cast his/her vote once, thereby fulfilling the one-man-one-vote procedure. It also makes the poll credible, as there would be no possibility of some people voting more than once.

## **Possible Issues to Raise**

Citizen journalists should raise the following issues:

- How is the Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) system being implemented in different communities? Do the voters understand the rationale behind the new system? What are the myths and misconceptions surrounding the BVR system?
- What does the Electoral Act say about the polling-based voting system? What are its advantages and disadvantages in relation to the ward-based voting system used in previous elections?
- How has the Supreme Court ruling on the voting rights of aliens in Zimbabwe facilitated their registration? Has the Electoral Act been amended to facilitate the voting rights of aliens? Any interviews on aliens' experiences with the BVR system?
- How much money was set aside for the 2018 harmonised election by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development during the Budget presentation? How much will be distributed to political parties?
- What is the state of preparedness of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in view of the upcoming elections? How many people have registered so far? Is there any gender, age, race and geographical-disaggregated data on the registration?

## CHAPTER 3: Citizen Journalism in Practice

In this section, we unpack details about practicing citizen journalism. Unlike the previous sections which were concerned with definitions and historical development of citizen journalism, here we are concerned with understanding the beat system, the art of storytelling, getting published and knowing your rights. We discuss the practical steps that one needs to take towards being a consistent and effective citizen journalist.

### What is a news story?

Any news article should have elements which include the element of immediacy. A news article must be fresh. News must have the element of proximity or nearness. What is news to some might not be news to others. Most of the time, it is a matter of nearness. What happens near you is news. For example, political violence breaks out in Chikanda Village might not be news to those who live in Mazvihwa communal lands, unless the whole district has been affected, which leads us to another element: oddity. Oddity is the peculiarity of an event which makes a story more interesting to read.

### How do you write a news story?

- First, you have to be precise about the correctness of the information that you are going to relay. A serious verification of information through researching for valid sources must of course be done before you proceed with writing your article.
- Citizen Journalism can also rely on self-stories, and that may include single sources of information. This may include capturing stories of community members, their concerns and wishes on elections. If your story needs verification, i.e. it's a story about an election event, which you did not witness; the question is how do you validate your sources?
- Citizen journalists could get valid information through attending community meetings, political gatherings, talking to community leaders, religious gatherings, attending sports events and talking to fellow community members, workshops, NGOs, Local Government officials, newsletters, pamphlets, radio and TV, social media and SMS.

News writing is basically a way different to creative writing. The creative side of news writing is drawn to a different perspective in which it is most directed to the proper usage of words that could be best understood by most of the people who would read your story. Thus, news writing is a strategic way of storytelling. News is written in such manner so that an audience would know the story at a first glance. If ever you get the details for your news article, remember the acronym “KISS” which stands for “Keep It Short and Simple”. For example, “The rat is eaten by the cat” is best written simply as “The cat ate the rat.” Both are grammatically correct but you could understand the latter more.

## Seven Steps in Citizen Journalism

There are seven key steps that are crucial in citizen journalism practice. These are:

**STEP 1:** Picking your area or issue of Interest. The best is to report about something that one is familiar with and interested in. For example, a citizen journalist could report about members of his or her own community such as local business people, traditional leaders, leaders of civil society organizations and residents.

### EXERCISE 1: DISCUSS ISSUES OF INTEREST IN YOUR AREA

**STEP2:** Knowing your rights before getting into the actual practice of citizen journalism, those wishing to be citizen journalists must be fully aware and conscious of their rights. Rights and freedoms that are immediately relevant to the exercise of citizen journalism.



## EXERCISE 2: DISCUSS AND STATE THESE RIGHTS

**STEP 3:** Being a responsible citizen journalist entails operating within the framework of the following ethical principles and guidelines that govern journalistic practice:

- Accuracy - Check your facts before you publish (corroborate story from room other sources, i.e. eye witnesses, those involved etc.);
- Avoiding plagiarism; acknowledge sources of information where possible and if such sources won't face any threats;
- Not invading or infringing on anyone's right to privacy;
- Understanding the on-ground sensitivities of an area or people;

## EXERCISE 3: DISCUSS CHALLENGES WITH MEETING THE ABOVE REQUIREMENTS

**STEP 4:** Start Writing

As is the case in professional journalism, stories or reports by citizen journalists must answer the questions, Who, What When, Where, Why and How

**Who:** Pertains to who is involved in the story in terms of the person or persons that are central to the story. When writing, there is need to identify the key people in the early stages of the story. When reporting; it is also required that names are spelled accurately. As has been further observed the Who aspect is more than a person's name.

**What:** The question of what draws attention to that would have happened to constitute news. In writing and reporting the what aspect is often the plot of your story, explaining what the characters did or what happened to them. The what question can also be answered with the aid of visuals. For example, a video can show dramatically what happened. A simple photograph can be used to illustrate what is being reported on.

**When:** The when aspect refers to the different aspects relating to the time and or times during which events in the story took place. When reporting, citizen journalists need to learn the order of events in the story. Stories tend to involve some event in the past or future (or both). Be sure to check the date, and make sure the day of the week matches

In some cases, there is need to present events in chronological order. There may also be need to provide context for a story giving reference to previous coverage of an issue similar to the one in the story or to related upcoming events.

A timeline can provide an effective visual for continuing stories, particularly when one reaches a milestone in the story.

**Where:** The where aspect relates to the geographical location or locations pertaining to the story. As part of story development, there is need to engage in research that includes gathering information about various places: venues, hometowns and communities pertaining to the story's key events, characters and other relevant aspects. Whereas answering the where question may involve a basic mention of a city, venue or address in a simple story, setting can be a crucial element in a story that unfolds in form of a narrative. As part of attending to the where question, there is need to verify addresses and the spellings of venues, communities and other locations in the story.

**Why:** The Why part of the story pertains to why the issue or event being reported happened or took place. The answering of the Why question must bring out the motivation behind actions, developments and events being reported on. In answering the why question, it may be necessary to find the people or documents that can help in establishing the cause and effect of issues or events being reported on. A video interview with the central character in the story or with an expert in the subject being covered can be an effective tool for answering the why aspect of a story

**How:** The how part of the story carries information on how an event happened. If the story is about a conflict, answering the how question involves bringing out details on how the conflict ended. An important question that must also be answered in this section is how much? For example, how much did it cost to build the road, how many people attended the public meeting? How much will the contractor be paid? The how part also pertains to how a journalist would have come to know what he or she will be reporting about. This points to how it is necessary to verify sources and the information they provide. Video clips and flow charts are among visuals that may be helpful for explaining processes that answer the how part of the story.<sup>8</sup>

**EXERCISE 4:**  
**WRITE A STORY USING THE STEPS  
AND STORY REQUIREMENTS ABOVE  
AND REVIEW WITH OTHERS**

**STEP 5:** Getting published using these channels:

- Writing letters to editors of newspapers and magazines
- Contributing articles to opinion columns of newspapers and magazines
- Establishing community newsletters that publicize content generated by citizen journalists. In some cases, there are community newspapers that can be utilized to publicize content generated by citizen journalists. For example, there is the *Tell Zimbabwe Newspaper* in Masvingo

<sup>8</sup>Ross and Comier, 2010, <https://stevebuttry.wordpress.com/2011/11/14/the-5-ws-and-how-of-writing-for-the-web/>

- Community radio initiatives operating around Zimbabwe. You can submit your text, audio and video content to various community radio stations like Wezhira, Radio Dialogue, Channel Zimbabwe, Radio Voice of the People. Citizen journalists may also initiate the setting of new community radio initiatives.
- Citizen journalism generated content can also be recorded and distributed on a wide scale through documentaries, CDs, DVDs and other devices
- Posting content to online platforms that publicize citizen journalism content, for example You Tube, *The Zimbabwe Sentinel*, #AMHVoices, Cable News Network (CNN)'s report and others.
- Sending news reports through WhatsApp and other social media platforms.
- Coming up with WhatsApp groups that are dedicated to spread information generated by citizen journalists. The WhatsApp groups can be discussion forums, issue forums and study circles.

**STEP 6:** Sticking to Citizen Journalism: Once you have started citizen journalism, you must continue practicing it on a continual basis. As differentiated from accidental journalists who practice journalism by chance, citizen journalists practice journalism on a consistent basis.

**STEP 7:** Getting Social<sup>9</sup>: Once you are into a consistent practice of citizen journalism it is necessary that you consistently promote your work and expand it using social networks that apply to your operating context. Where possible, you can utilize WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other social networks to expand your reach and to develop new contacts. Fellow members on WhatsApp groups, followers on Twitter, Friends on Facebook and other social media acquaintances are potential audiences and sources in your work as a citizen journalist. You can also expand your networks through active participation in civic activities such as public meetings, council meetings, budget presentation meetings, civic forums constituency development meetings and others.

<sup>9</sup> [www.thecitizenscampaign.org](http://www.thecitizenscampaign.org)



Citizens undergo Biometric Voter Registration process in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe

Photo: ZESN

## Tips for Citizen Journalists

Besides the seven-steps outline above, there are other important issues that citizen journalists ought to know when covering elections. These include:

### **Know your subject**

Most stories require a bit of advance research, even if you're an experienced citizen reporter and fairly familiar with the issues involved. But be very choosy about the sources of your information. Stick to original source material as much as possible. If you're using secondary sources like news reports, look for articles published by reputable newspapers, magazines and reporters. Many news organisations still have clippings libraries that contain articles not available on the Internet. In the age of Google, these are often sorely under-utilised and, in some instances, a potential gold

mine of information that could give you the edge over other citizen journalists working a story.

### **Talk to your colleagues.**

If you're using articles written by other journalists as background and there are elements that aren't clear or strike you as odd, ask questions. You'll quickly get a feel for whether or not the articles were the product of a thorough reporting job.

### **No such thing as a stupid question**

Just because something has been published don't assume that it is right. We all get things wrong from time to time. Errors slip through news editors and sub-editors. Articles in library and online news archives that have been subject to corrections after publication may not include links or cross-references to those corrections. The importance of proper research cannot be understated. Never go to an interview without preparing for it first. And during an interview, check key facts like dates, spellings and places with the interviewee. Mistakes - big and small - are easily perpetuated if you don't take the trouble to check things with the source directly. There is no such thing as a stupid question. More often than not people will appreciate your diligence.

### **Use a recorder (if available)**

Record the interviews you conduct or you risk you will get it wrong somewhere along the line. Or you may not be able to accurately recall the context in which something was said. If you record an interview, there is little room for error. Transcribing interviews can however be a hugely time-consuming process and rather onerous when working to a tight deadline. During an interview, jot down the timecode of the recording at key moments or when the interview says something noteworthy. That way you can locate it quickly later. Having a recording of an interview is also good insurance. If the interviewee later claims to have been misquoted, you have evidence that they were quoted accurately.

### **Always take notes**

Recorders fail and batteries die. There are few things worse than doing a long interview and discovering afterwards that the interview didn't record. Your notes are also a crucial guide to the interview. Mark key quotes in your notebook with an asterisk or underline them so you can find them more easily when you sit down to write the article.

### **Check all the details, no matter how inconsequential they may seem**

Go over important aspects with the interviewee until you are certain you have it right. It is very important to take the time to check the dates, times, ages, exact titles and names. Don't make assumptions. Nothing annoys people more than having their names misspelt. If, for example, someone says his name is "Temba", check it. It could be "Themba". If the person's name is Bongji, check if it is a short form and if she wishes to be known by her full name (it could be Sibongile). Do it by spelling it back to the person rather than letting them spell it to you. There is less room for error this way because you will not mishear them.

### **Check anything you don't understand**

You can't write about something if you don't understand what it's about. Remember there are no stupid questions. If it's a dauntingly complex issue or subject, for example, something to do with science or technology or economics, try and explain it back to the person you are interviewing. They won't mind and will appreciate your attempts at clarity.

Always get the person's cell phone number and ask them if you can phone them later with any queries. They will appreciate you wanting to get it right. If you can tell you're going to need more information on a story or more sources, ask the person you're interviewing if there is anyone else they can suggest you talk to. One interview can lead to many more and help you gain a thorough understanding of the subject you are tackling.

### **Use of numbers or figures in citizen journalism**

Numbers or figures are crucial for elections reporting. In fact, numbers and percentages are the domain of electoral processes. Therefore, citizen journalists must possess some kind of basic numeracy skills. Percentages are also important in terms of the announcement of election results. Although raw numbers are used by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, percentages are used for comparative purposes.

Campaign funding is also another area where statistics are critical. Citizen journalists ought to be well-versed about the amount of money used by candidates and parties for political campaign purposes. This includes money used for holding rallies, buying party regalia, feeding the poor and elderly, salaries for party agents and other related costs. Previous statistics related to voter turnout, spoiled ballots, number of candidates

and gender-disaggregated data are also important for citizen journalists. These data sets can be found on the websites of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, Electoral resource centre, VERITAS, Zimbabwe electoral support network and others. Citizen journalists should also use statistics which are posted outside each polling stations, confirmed statistics after tallying of results and verified statistics as announced by the command centre.

### **Appreciation of measuring audience feedback and participation in citizen journalism**

It is important for a citizen journalist to understand their audiences, more so if you are using social media. If you are on Facebook and Twitter, you may want to analyse who is reading your story and what are they saying about such a story. This will help you appreciate whether your story is making impact, i.e. informative enough and the information is helpful or you need to provide an update or even missed some key information that you may want to provide.

If you are well versed in Facebook, Twitter, these platforms provide information that can help you analyse your story or presence on social media. Such platforms include Facebook Insights, Google Analytics, Chart beat, Content Insights; Eco-box, Alexa, Bright Cove and Disqus. Say you are running a blog or a website as a citizen journalist, you can use Google Analytics because of its link to Google AdSense, which enables you to attract Google advertisements based on their audience reach. These tools are called Analytic tools and will enable you to have a more complete picture of the audience behaviour online, including the type of news they follow, the amount of time they spend per story, the devices they use and so forth. On social media platforms, you can focus on likes, comments, shares, retweets, views and reposting.

## **The Citizen Journalism News Production Process**

### **The production process:**

- What issues are you intending to cover and why?
- What is your interest and relationship to the Story?
- Who is the target audience, who does you, want to receive this information?
- What questions would they want you to ask on their behalf?



- Who would be best to answer those questions?
- Who could you talk to in order to dig deeper?
- How could you include diverse perspectives?

### **Planning the story**

- Be clear about what you want
- Have you done your research?
- Where can you find background information?
- What questions were left unanswered?

### **Producing the material**

- Gathering the news
- Be sure you know your facts before conducting an interview
- Draft out an initial script, but keep an open mind for the unexpected
- Try to think through the way the story will work
- Better to have a framework before you start, you can always discard it.
- Logistics - who does what?
- Guest bookings - when is the interviewee available?
- Have you briefed the interviewee about the area of questioning?
- Have you got official permission to interview? (applicable in sensitive situations)
- Do you have the equipment ready?

### **Setting up the story**

- Logistics and resources (Time, money i.e. transport, airtime, internet access)
- Take spare batteries if possible
- Is it safe to go where you intend to go?
- Have you told someone where you are going?
- How will you communicate with the office or your producer?
- Let them know when you arrive and when you leave
- Be punctual - be there when you say you will.
- What material has been gathered?
- Listen to it and take notes
- What news angles have been uncovered?
- What is the headline for your story?
- What is the summary?
- What angles need to be developed?

### Quality control

- Check all facts - is the material accurate?
- Check the ethics - is the material fair, objective and impartial?
- Do you need to approach anyone for a right of reply?
- Did you miss anything?
- Do you need to add any more information?
- Does the piece still make sense?

### Honest assessment

- Has the interview killed the story?
- Is the material the best you could have possibly produced in the time available?
- Will it inform the public debate, or is it just more noise?
- Is it clear, or is it confusing?
- Have you used simple and short sentences?
- Remember **KISS: Keep it short and simple.**
- What worked and what didn't work?
- How could you have done better?
- Where did you make serious mistakes?
- Where did you do really well?

### Production review

- How did we do?
- What would you do differently next time?
- Were you in danger at any point?
- Did you take any unnecessary risks?
- Did you find the exercise rewarding in professional terms?

## Photography is Key to Any Citizen Journalist

At the core of citizen journalism is the need to take photos and videos using accessible technologies. Hence photography is very important for citizen journalists. With the aid of smartphones, laptops, Ipads and tablets, it is now easier for citizen journalists to engage in photography and videography. Smartphones with a great camera and the ability to record high definition video are no longer difficult to find - in fact they're everywhere.

## The five shot method

Developed by Michael Rosenblum, the “five shot” method prioritises meaningful video sequences. Good photo and video stories need strong individual shots. When made up of shots that support each other, an individual sequence can tell a complete story. Each sequence of five shots makes a complete scene.

- This shot shows **WHAT** is being done.
- The next shot is a close-up of the subject’s face. Show two eyes, not a profile shot. The shot must focus on **WHO’S** doing it.
- For the third shot, move back from the action and capture a medium shot of the subject. Respect the **LINE OF ACTION**. This part of the scene makes clear **WHERE** it takes place.
- Next, move to an **“over-the-shoulder”** shot. Standing just behind the subject, shoot downward toward the action - as in this case hands on the keyboard, for example - showing what’s happening from a point-of-view. This shot combines the previous three ideas into one shot. It also shows **HOW** it’s being done. Add a creative shot to help tell the story, something unusual that provides story specific context. You might use an unusual angle, stand on a chair, crawl on your belly, look for reflective surfaces, vary what is in the foreground or background. This will be particular to your location or story.

## EXERCISE 5: USING YOUR PHONE TAKE A FEW PHOTOGRAPHS THAT TELL A STORY

## Tips for Recording Video for the Mobile Phone

### Camera stability

If you have a tripod or monopod, use it. Avoid jerky movements, and pan as slowly as possible. If you plan to show an event or scene, make sure you move the camera slowly. Otherwise, you will produce blurred footage, though sometimes this is OK if you want to give a sense of action.

### Audio

For the best audio quality, use an external microphone. If you use the smartphone's built-in microphone, ensure you get close to the person you interview. If you use a tripod or monopod it is OK to sit the subject down. But much breaking news happens quickly so it is possible that interviews will be done standing up or on the run.

### Lighting

It is best to film in sunlight. Make sure when filming to keep the sun behind your back. Low-resolution videos look best when shot in lots of light. If you are filming inside, ideally use lights. If possible, use several lights to fill the subject from all sides.

### Camera movement

If you need to pan, pan slowly to avoid jerkiness in the video. Better still, keep the camera locked in one place and allow the action to come into the viewfinder. Most mobile phone video cameras do not have a digital zoom. If yours does, it is still best not to use the zoom. Better to get closer to the subject. Ideally stay in one place and aim to let the action come to you.

### Interviews

Much mojo work involves doing interviews with newsmakers or witnesses. Frame the person carefully before you press the record button. In traditional television terms, think close-up. Train yourself to frame the person.

### Uploading

If you are uploading video directly from your smartphone, it helps to select lower-quality video so you get a smaller file size. You can send via WhatsApp, email or even other social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. Keep it smaller and light in terms of file size.

## CHAPTER 4: Ethics

Like professional journalists, citizen journalists need to be aware of some ethical values which can affect their civic duty. This does not necessarily mean citizen journalists have to operate as professional journalists. The main question here is: Do citizen journalists need to adhere to ethical guidelines? The answer is Yes.

### What are ethics anyway?

Ethics are a branch of philosophy which deals with questions related to 'rightness' and 'goodness' - how we come to know what is right or wrong; how we define those concepts and how they would be applied to our lives.

### Guidelines on ethical citizen journalism

Below are some of the ethical values which citizen journalists can use in the day to day activities: which outlines the basics and are always good to keep in mind if you plan to offer objective reporting:

1. **Minimizing harm:** Ethical citizen journalism treats sources, subjects, colleagues and members of the public as human beings deserving of respect. They should balance the public's need for information against potential harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance or undue intrusiveness.
2. **Present the facts:** Offer what you have directly observed or verified, and don't invent details or speculate. This means being stingy with the use of superlatives and adjectives. If you are writing fact and not fiction, you need to be meticulous about getting the facts right.
3. **Avoid hearsay:** Never trust a single source, no matter how trustworthy, but check your facts. Verify any claim before reporting it, and if you can't verify the claim, attribute it - "According to ...." Also keep it relevant and don't embellish with negative or irrelevant comments ("He was foolish to...").
4. **Omit your opinion:** If you are reporting as a journalist, stick to the facts and leave your personal views out of the story. If you feel you need to expose an injustice, let the truth of the story do it for you.

5. **Avoid plagiarism:** Always attribute material you are citing (which is incredibly easy to do with Web links) and attribute your sources, whether print, broadcast, online, or from other outlets.
6. **Always identify yourself:** Make sure the other parties you interview know who you are and what you are writing about. Before quoting them, make sure they know where you plan to use the information. It's important to respect your sources.
7. **Identify your sources:** Make it clear that your sources' comments are "on the record" and they can expect to be quoted. If you are working on a sensitive story and the sources want to remain anonymous, you need to verify that arrangement in advance. There are some rules about the use of "off the record," which basically means the comments are for information only and not to be attributed or quoted. Similarly, "on background" means you are looking for information to paraphrase but that won't be attributed or quoted.
8. **Fact checking:** Never take anyone's word for the truth. Verify information from other sources and use trusted news sources and documents as well as interviews. That way you can eliminate errors and exaggeration and write a truthful and balanced story.
9. **Integrity of photographs:** Just as news stories should be factual and demand integrity, so should photos. Never alter a photo so it could mislead or deceive a reader. Finally, there are the new ethical issues raised by the rise of new image technology. These images include both photographs and video. You have access to new and easy ways to capture and transmit images, such as cell phones linked to the internet via wireless technology. These new technologies allow you to alter and manipulate images. The manipulation of images is so tempting that mainstream newsrooms have fired a string of photojournalists over the past decade to discourage fraudulent practices.
10. **Spelling and grammar:** Be sure to proofread your content and check for both spelling and grammatical errors. Be especially careful of proper names and look for missing words.

11. **Be transparent and declare any potential conflicts of interest:** Even as a citizen journalist, one must guard against conflict of interest. It is also important to be transparent about your prejudices, interests and standpoint when writing hard news stories.
12. **Distinguish fact from opinion:** Don't confuse the two, always label them accordingly. There is a difference between hard and soft news.
13. **If there is a source that backs up your thoughts, post a link to it:** You can also beef up your stories by posting links to them. This allows others to track your thoughts beyond the present article. It can also help you to guard against plagiarism.

**EXERCISE 8:  
DISCUSS STRATEGIES YOU CAN USE TO  
DEAL WITH TROLLING AND HATE  
SPEECH ONLINE**



An ZESN observer at a by-election in rural Gutu, Zimbabwe

Photo: ZESN

## CHAPTER 5: Special Concerns

### Citizen Journalism and Gender Issues

#### Gender roles in citizen media

Media plays a large role in creating social norms, because various forms of media, including advertisements, television, and film, are present in most societies. Gender roles, as an example, exist solely because society as a whole chooses to accept them, but they are largely perpetuated by the media. It is important for citizen journalists to be aware of gender issues to watch out for in election reporting because women and men are affected differently by electoral processes.



## Gender representation and portrayal

Citizen journalists must be aware of what the media is presenting to them, and make sure they're not actively participating in a culture of gender discrimination. A primary way in which media distort reality is in underrepresenting women. For example, the Global Media Monitoring project (GMMP) report of 2015 shows that women make up only 24% of the persons heard, read about or seen in newspaper, television and radio news, exactly as they did in 2010<sup>10</sup>. The same report also states that, 'Women's relative invisibility in traditional news media has crossed over into digital news delivery platforms: Only 26% of the people in Internet news stories and media news Tweets combined are women.'

This is glaring during electoral contests where male candidates are often covered extensively ahead of female candidates. Elections are presented as male contests with females being presented as voters, cheerleaders and rally attendees. Media Monitors 2013 reports show that women's voices account for only 14% of voices covered in political stories. Citizen journalists can make deliberate effort to ensure that their reportage cover perspectives of both women and men equally without prejudice. Voices of both women candidates and female voters should be accorded equal space in media debates and the media coverage. Citizen journalist can enhance the quality of their coverage of the electoral process if they are able to distinguish the different experiences of women and men in the electoral processes.

## Gender stereotyping

Gender stereotypes are socially constructed beliefs about men and women. They are constructed through sayings, songs, proverbs, the media, religion, custom, culture, education, drama etc. Social media jokes and cartoons tend to depict women in very stereotypical ways which reinforces discrimination and unjust gender practices. Messages and memes on social media carry significant messages about cultural norms and values, but also norms of gendered relations for both men and women. It is important for any progressive citizen journalist to be aware of the gender concerns related to the portrayal of both men and women on new media platforms.

<sup>10</sup> Global Media Monitoring Project GMMP 2015 Report, 'Who Makes The News' see [http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports\\_2015/highlights/highlights\\_en.pdf](http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2015/highlights/highlights_en.pdf)

## Political violence and sexism

Women and men experience politically motivated violence differently during electoral periods. Women suffer the extra burden of sexual violence and gender based violence linked to political violence. Citizen journalists can help expose cases of gender-based violence linked to political violence. Sexist language often used to intimidate women candidates and voters should be avoided by all media.

The media's multiple contributions to elections can also be applied to addressing gender discrimination and promoting equal participation, for example:

- **Media as watchdog:** As a citizen journalist, you can include questions of gender discrimination in its accountability role. For example, the media can ask: Is ZEC properly addressing access for female voters? Are political parties practicing gender stereotyping and discrimination?
- **Media as civic educator:** The media has the responsibility to educate the nation about gender disparities in the electoral process and challenge gender stereotyping. For example, this can be done through content that flags out key gender issues in the electoral cycle as well as portraying women and men equally in positive light.
- **Media as campaign platform:** in your interactions with political parties, you can encourage parties to put forward female spokespeople and use a range of images of women and men.
- **Media as public voice, analyst and interpreter:** You can encourage dialogue that includes a diversity of voices, and provide analysis that uses women as experts and includes a gender lens on a range of topics.

## Suggestions for Citizen Reporting:

You can highlight the following issues:

- How many female and male candidates are intending to run for the primary elections in their respective parties? How many of them are going to be appointed via the quota system? How fair is the competition between female and male candidates within political parties?

How can citizen journalists amplify the voices of female candidates and female voters in the electoral debates?

- What does the Constitution say about the proportional representation? Are political parties adhering to the constitutional clauses?
- What are the challenges and opportunities facing women in the electoral processes of voter registration, accessing voter information, during the campaign period, on the polling day and during the post-election periods?

### EXERCISE 6:

**DISCUSS THE NUMBER AND LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ELECTION RELATED DEBATES ON THE ALTERNATIVE MEDIA PLATFORMS THAT YOU HAVE ACCESS TO**

**WHAT ARE THE TRENDS AND HOW CAN THESE BE IMPROVED?**

## News and Disinformation

“Fake news” is a term that can mean different things, depending on the context. News satire is often called fake news as are parodies such as the “Saturday Night Live” mock newscast Weekend Update. There are several definitions that have been thrown around but for the purposes of this guide, we suggest the following are relevant:

- Stories that are probably false.
- Hoaxes and disinformation purporting to be real news - often using social media to drive web traffic and amplify their effect.
- Fictional pieces of information or narratives - which are used to discredit individuals, as well as their viewpoints and agendas.
- News stories that have no factual basis but are presented as news
- Completely false information that is created for financial gain

### EXERCISE 7 DISCUSS FAKE NEWS OR STORIES IN YOUR OWN CONTEXT

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO AVOID FAKE NEWS  
OR IDENTIFY IT?

## How to spot fake news?

Every internet user now has the power to publish stories or videos and to produce fake news. Citizen journalists have various tools to detect if a news story is fake:

1. Click on the website's "about us" section or look for a disclaimer. Many fake news websites attempt to soften their dishonesty by saying that they cannot guarantee that their content is true - either in the "about us" section or in a "disclaimer".
2. Look for a "satire" or "fauxtire" label. Genuine satirical websites - like South Africa's ZANEWS - try to make you laugh about real news events. Dreaming up false stories is not satire, but labelling it as such is another way in which fake news websites attempt to get away with their lies.
3. Check whether the site is an Interactive Advertising Bureau member.
4. Search for the owner of the website. By typing in the website address on a lookup website you can see who registered the address (called a domain).

Use these lookup websites:

- International website addresses (.com)
- Local website addresses (.co.zw)

## Fake news in Zimbabwe

Like in other countries, fake news is rampant on social media platforms in Zimbabwe. The rise of social media has broken down many of the boundaries that prevented fake news from spreading in democracies. In particular, it has allowed anyone to create and disseminate information, especially those that have proven most adept at "gaming" how social networks operate.

Fake news on the platform has led to panic buying and price increases in Zimbabwe. President Mugabe has been reported to have died several times, the news of the opposition leader Tsvangirai's death have once circulated on social media, all of which simply has been fake.

## CHAPTER 6: Moderation of Social Media Groups

In this section, we focus on the dos and don'ts when it comes to moderation of WhatsApp, Facebook and Google+ groups and hangouts. It also discusses various moderation strategies that administrators can use to promote free expression, vibrant political and social talk. As citizen journalists, we interact with so many people using social media and some of us are members of countless social media groups.

### What is moderation?

Moderation should not be confused with censorship. It allows social media groups and pages to be protected from hate speech, pornography and obscenities. As they say, prevention is better than cure. Content moderation refers to the practice of listening, escalating and responding to inappropriate user generated content (UGC) on a social media group or page. UGC includes: blog or forum comments, reviews, photos, videos, and tweets. This also includes the moderation of a WhatsApp group, Facebook, or Twitter page, such as a citizen journalism group, blog, community forum or community radio page.

For instance, Media Centre has the 'MC Citizen Journalists' WhatsApp Group. By applying a set of rules which define what is acceptable and what is not, content can be quickly removed when a user's comments fall short of the mark. It is important that you ensure that racism, nudity, violence and hate speech as well as unwanted ads or spam don't end up filling up your pages or groups. Social media management and moderation is a fine balance between overdoing and excessive monitoring. There is a thin line between letting it loose and holding on tight. The goal is to protect your members and group or page without affecting user experience.

### Six steps to effective social media moderation

- Establish and clearly state rules for your social media profile, page or community. Set the tone for posts and comments, discourage abusive language and be proactive in implementing these rules.
- Allow positive and negative feedback as well as comments on the page. Positive feedback is great encouragement and motivation, but it is the negative comments and criticism that you need to pay attention to. They will tell you what you want from you, what they are not happy with and how you can improve your brand and services for them.

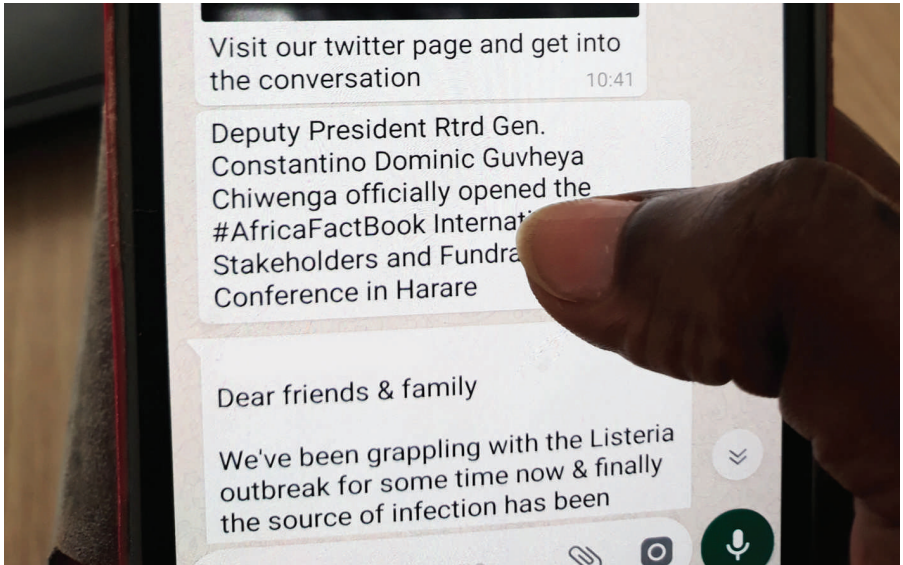
- Archive all posts from your social media page, which can prove useful in case of future legal hassles. They will act as a legal proof of everything that has been on your social media pages at any point of time.
- Train moderators on how to manage your social media presence. Even if you hire an experienced moderator, they will still have to be explained and made aware of rules or specifications you may have for your social media pages.
- Your social media presence is all about your followers, so respect them, listen to them and change your strategies accordingly, if required.
- Have a manager only for community pages on social media. Communities usually have the highest traffic, so a dedicated community manager is a useful resource to hire.

### **Things to watch out for during social media moderation**

- Avoid using abusive language at all costs. No matter how abusive your followers and their comments are, do not resort to bad language, threats and abuses on your social media page.
- Do not post or allow posting plagiarized content on your social media. Even if you are not the one posting it, it can still get you legally tangled if you let people post plagiarized content of any kind on your pages.
- Do not ignore legal issues if they crop up. Legal suits and cases are becoming increasingly common as social media is becoming stronger as a public platform.
- Do not moderate your social media pages excessively. Excessive moderation means you will end up deleting a lot of posts and messages, and eventually end up losing followers.

### **Hate speech, harm and offense**

One of the most concerning things about the internet and social media is the indiscriminate dissemination of hate speech. Hate speech often uses gender, race, ethnicity, religion and other stratification factors to forment the 'us' vs. 'them' differences. Social media are rife with hate speech.



Zimbabwean Citizen Journalists' Whatsapp platform administered by the Media Center

Photo: IMS

### **What is hate speech?**

Hate speech refers to expressions that advocate incitement to harm (particularly, discrimination, hostility or violence) based upon the target's being identified with a certain social or demographic group. It may include, but is not limited to, speech that advocates, threats, or encourages violent acts. For some, however, the concept extends also to expressions that foster a climate of prejudice and intolerance on the assumption that this may fuel targeted discrimination, hostility and violent attacks. Citizen journalists have a duty to ensure that permissible speech is circulated on the internet and social media. Like other countries, Zimbabwe's constitution protects the freedom of expression; however, it places a limitation on speech that propagates for war; incites imminent violence; or advocates hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm.

### **What is trolling?**

Trolling and online harassment are also major problems on social media platforms. Trolling, by definition, is the act of deliberately instigating emotional reactions from others through inflammatory or offensive interactions online. Internet trolls target



victims for a variety of reasons, and trolling topics can range from politics and current events to celebrity gossip and sports. Bots (internet-enabled robots) can also act as trolls on social media. Motivations for trolling can range from innocent joking to revenge or criminal activity.

### **Doxing (or doxxing)**

Doxing is a form of trolling that consists of trolls posting some or all of the personal information (name, address, phone number, voter registration serial numbers, birth date, etc.) of their victims online for public view. Typically, doxing is used as a scare tactic or threat by inciting fear in victims, while encouraging others to join (i.e. making it possible for the troll and others to visit the victims' residences, harass victims via phone call or text message, etc.). Doxing is especially concerning because it can lead to fraud, identity theft and physical harm to the victim.

### **Cyber Troops**

These are government, military or political party teams committed to manipulating public opinion over digital media. These use various strategies on Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp like posting pro-government messages and propaganda meant to cultivate positive or negative engagement.

### **Digital Propaganda**

The use of information and communication technologies to manipulate perceptions, affect cognition, and influence behaviour.

### **Bots**

software that is designed to automate routine tasks on social media like commenting, posting, recommending next song on YouTube, liking and tweeting and so forth. These bots are used to spread propaganda, for trolling purposes and spreading hate speech online.

### **What should you do?**

What if you encounter a troll? Follow these tips to help you determine the best way to respond to trolls on your personal pages:

1. Address it. Directly addressing the trolls can sometimes help deescalate the situation. If trolling comments are centered on rumors or controversies, it could be beneficial to confront the comments with facts. Some of the best responses to trolls have been debunking rumors and false claims through humor. Just make sure to remain professional so that you don't become a troll yourself!
2. Report it. If the trolling is severe enough, social media sites allow you to report abusive behavior. These platforms will also allow you to block other users participating in trolling behavior. If you are experiencing trolling online, but not on social media, you can also contact the site's moderator to report the offensive behavior.
3. Ignore it. Sometimes the best way to handle trolls is to merely ignore them. Trolls thrive on the attention they receive from users on public platforms. Ignoring their comments and encouraging others to ignore them as well can prevent the trolling from escalating.

**EXERCISE 9:  
DISCUSS THE MOST CRITICAL ETHICAL ISSUES  
ANY CITIZEN JOURNALIST MUST OBSERVE  
IN THEIR LINE OF WORK**

## **CHAPTER 7: Safety Concerns**

### **Safety & Security Issues**

As a citizen journalist, you are not always safe from politicians, political parties, overzealous law enforcement agencies and youth militia groups that consider you to be a threat. The first banal rule in journalism relating to risky coverage of events is that no story is worth dying for. Thus, if it is not safe it is not worth the risk. The preservation of life and safety is paramount.

### **Handy tips for physical and digital security**

#### **Assert your rights**

- When understanding your rights, you will be in a position to challenge government officials, security forces or political party vigilantes who may try to bar you from enjoying these rights and exercising your duties and responsibilities as a citizen and citizen journalist.

#### **Know your area of operation**

- When covering events such as protest marches and political rallies, it is necessary to survey routes and venues beforehand. The surveying must be done in a discreet manner that keeps you out of trouble. You need to be familiar with the roads and where they lead to in case you have to leave suddenly.

#### **Learn and Observe Local Community protocols**

- As a citizen journalist you must not violate the protocol and cultural values of the community in which you operate. This is in terms of such issues as who you speak to first when you go into a community, how you address leaders, how you greet people, language sensitivities and such other issues pertaining to protocol, cultural norms, tradition and values.

#### **Dress Appropriately**

- Always dress in an appropriate manner and in accordance to local tradition. Clothing that attracts attention must be avoided, especially in highly charged electoral contexts.

- Do not dress in ways that make you conspicuous. You must be aware of the colors of the political movements and parties active in your area of operation, avoiding wearing them in ways that raise suspicion.

### **Avoid Unnecessary Trouble**

- While bravery is necessary in civic activism, it is necessary to remember that you must not necessarily put yourself in danger.
- Never carry any kind of weapons.
- Be connected and stay in touch with Human Rights Defenders Networks that include organizations such as Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), Legal Resources Foundation (LRF), Abameli and others.

### **Ensure that you are digitally secure**

- Learn digital security concepts, tips and rules and apply them in your activities as a citizen journalist. For example, you may have to utilize security passwords, delete sensitive information once you have utilized it and where possible, utilize encryption devices and software.

### **Hunting in packs**

- For your physical security, always pursue a story with others who can watch over your back. In highly volatile political contexts, citizen journalists can be abducted, tortured or even killed for pursuing certain news stories. Like lions, it is advisable to hunt in packs.

## **Seven Steps to Digital Security**

Here are some basic tips to consider when thinking about your own digital security.

### **1. The Weakest Link**

Think about assets as components of the system in which they are used. The security of the asset depends on the strength of all the components in the system.

The old adage that "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link" applies to security too: The system as a whole is only as strong as the weakest component. For example, the best door lock is of no use if you have cheap window latches. Encrypting your email so it won't get intercepted in transit won't protect the confidentiality of that email if you store an unencrypted copy on your laptop and your laptop is stolen. That doesn't mean you have to do everything simultaneously, but it does mean that you should spend time thinking about every part of your information and computer use.

## **2. Simpler is Safer and Easier**

It is generally most cost-effective and most important to protect the weakest component of the system in which an asset is used. Since the weak components are much easier to identify and understand in simple systems, you should strive to reduce the number and complexity of components in your information systems.

## **3. More Expensive Doesn't Mean More Secure**

Don't assume that the most expensive security solution is the best; especially if it takes away resources needed elsewhere. Low-cost measures like shredding trash before leaving it on the curb can give you lots of bang for your security buck.

## **4. It's Okay to Trust *Someone* (But Always Know Who You're Trusting)**

Computer security advice can end up sounding like you should trust absolutely no one but yourself. In the real world, you almost certainly trust plenty of people with at least some of your information, from your close family or companion to your doctor or lawyer. What's tricky in the digital space is understanding who you are trusting, and with what.

## **5. There is No Perfect Security - There's Always a Trade - Off**

Set security policies that are reasonable for your lifestyle, for the risks you face, and for the implementation steps you and your colleagues will take. A perfect security policy on paper won't work if it's too difficult to follow day-to-day.

## **6. What's Secure Today May Not Be Secure Tomorrow**

It is also crucially important to continually re-evaluate your security practices. This includes regularly updating passwords of emails and social media accounts. You also need to clear caches on your mobile phones and delete unnecessary browsing history on social media and mobile phones.

## 7. E-mail Security Tips

Journalists and newsrooms are increasingly being targeted through their email. Virtually every “sophisticated” hack of an individual reporter or entire news organization starts with a relatively simple attack: phishing and spear phishing.

### **Suggestions for citizen reporters:**

You should be aware of the following security and safety issues:

- Make sure your mobile phones and social media accounts have strong passwords
- If possible, encrypt your mobile phones, computers, laptops and Ipads. You can use free encryption technologies available online.
- Use unregistered sim cards when contacting whistle-blowers to protect your digital footprints
- Always delete your browsing history and metadata on your mobile phones and computers to protect yourself and news sources.
- Be connected and stay in touch with Human Rights Defenders Networks that include organizations such as Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), Legal Resources Foundation (LRF), Abameli and others.

**EXERCISE 10**  
**DISCUSS AND REVIEW YOUR MOST URGENT SECURITY RISKS AND STRATEGIES YOU CAN USE TO MINIMISE THEM**

## REFERENCES

Banda, F. 2010. *Citizen journalism and democracy in Africa: an exploratory study*. Highway Africa, Grahamstown.

Bowman, S. and Willis, C. 2003. *We Media: How audiences are shaping the future of news and information*. Reston, VA: The Media Center at the American Press Institute. fs30

Caitlin, E. 2013. "Hate Speech in Social Media: An Exploration of the Problem and Its Proposed Solutions". *Journalism & Mass Communication Graduate Theses & Dissertations*. 15.

Gaidzanwa, R. B. 2004. *Gender, Women and Electoral Politics in Zimbabwe*. Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA).

Gillmor, D. 2004: "We the media – grassroots journalism by people, for people", O'Reilly Media, Inc.

Hermans, L., Vergeer, M. and D'Haenens, L. 2009. Internet in the Daily Life of Journalists: Explaining the use of the Internet by Work-Related Characteristics and Professional Opinions. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. 15(1): 138–157.

Hunt, A. and Gentzkow, M. 2017. "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election" Working paper for the National Bureau of Economic Research, No. 23089, 2017.

Lievrouw, L.A. 2013. . *Digital Media and Society Series*. Polity Press: London.

Maphosa, M., Tshuma, N and Ncube, G. 2015. Participation of Women in Zimbabwean politics and Mirage the gender equity. *Ubuntu: Journal of Conflict and Social Transformation*, 4(2): 127-159.

Muleya, D. (28 June 2013). Elections Reporting and media ethics. The Zimbabwe Independent, Opinion. A paper presented to local journalists at a Misa workshop in Bulawayo.

Smith, D. A. and Lee, P. 2012. A code of ethics for citizen journalism. Retrieved on February 26th 2016 from:  
[http://www.rjr.ru.ac.za/rjrpdf/rjr\\_no32/a\\_code\\_of\\_ethics\\_for\\_citizen\\_journalism.pdf](http://www.rjr.ru.ac.za/rjrpdf/rjr_no32/a_code_of_ethics_for_citizen_journalism.pdf)

Rosen, J. 2008. A most useful definition of Citizen Journalism. PressThink. Retrieved 20 December 2017.

Ward, S. J.A. 2010. Digital media ethics, Centre for Journalism Ethics.



Join the global work for press freedom and stay up to date on  
media issues world wide



Mediasupport.org



Facebook.com/InternationalMediaSupport



Twitter.com/forfreedia



The content of this publication is copyright protected.  
International Media Support (IMS) is happy to share the text  
in the publication with you under the Creative Commons  
Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License. To view a  
summary of this license, please visit  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>.

Published in Denmark by IMS in 2018

#### Authors and Editors

Dr. Admire Mare, Henrik Keith, Simbiso Marimbe & Rashweat  
Mukundu

Design and Production: Color Crazy

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the  
European Union and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.  
The contents of this publication is the sole responsibility of  
IMS and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the  
European Union or the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

ISBN: 978-87-92209-90-0



EUROPEAN UNION



Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs